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AUTHOR Hunt, Todd
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ABSTRACT

With an investment of time and a willingness to explore exchanges of resources, Rutgers University (New Jersey), and the corporation, Johnson & Johnson, developed a partnership between the corporate public relations department and the university program in public relations. The relationship began in 1982 when Rutgers founded its Public Relations Students Society of America (PRSSA) chapter and Johnson & Johnson weathered the Tylenol tampering incident. During this period a Johnson & Johnson public relations executive and a Rutgers faculty member met and began an exchange of favors which eventually led to development of a fruitful partnership. The relationship has grown to encompass exchanges of information, services and support that include a fellowship program for students enrolled in the Master's program in communication and information studies; a continuing education plan for the corporate public relations department; opportunities for faculty to "shadow" Johnson & Johnson executives through key public relations activities; consistent support from Johnson & Johnson through sponsorships and contributions; assistance with special projects; outreach to other campuses; participation in and support for an oral history project; and sharing of speakers and facilities for site visits. (JB)

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Many college public relations teachers call on professionals from nearby businesses as classroom speakers in order to bring some "real-world examples" to the classroom. Likewise, public relations departments routinely contact professors to set up internships for students.

Very nice, these occasional contacts between town and gown. But with a slightly greater investment of time -- along with a willingness to explore further exchanges of resources -- the relationship can broaden into a full-fledged partnership between the corporate public relations department and the university program in public relations.

Rutgers University and Johnson & Johnson -- neighbors across the street from each other in New Brunswick, N.J. -- provide an example of how such a partnership can be a win-win situation.

The relationship between Johnson & Johnson, the worldwide health-care products company, and the Rutgers public relations program dates back to 1982, a landmark year for both. For Rutgers, it was the period when we decided to increase our course offerings and lay the foundation for a Public Relations Students Society of America (PRSSA) chapter. For Johnson & Johnson, it was the time of the Tylenol tampering incident, and the resulting industry-wide boost to its reputation that resulted from the company's adherence to the Credo laid down by its founder.

Johnson & Johnson public relations executives routinely serve on the boards of directors of community service organizations, which is where I met Robert V. Andrews. We served on the board of the local regional professional nonprofit theater, both of us offering our expertise in publicity and fundraising. Bob Andrews was the person to whom I turned when I needed to introduce myself and my students to the corporate public relations field: he literally opened up his Roladex to us. And that was just the beginning.

After the Tylenol incident, Andrews came on campus to speak to our students about how the firm handled the incident. In return, our students presented a plaque commemorating the firm's actions to then-chairman James Burke of Johnson & Johnson. Andrews arranged a meeting between the students in Burke's office, along with Johnson & Johnson vice president for public relations Lawrence G. Foster. It was the beginning of a fruitful partnership.

Under the current corporate vice president for public affairs Willard D. Nielsen, the relationship has grown to encompass many exchanges of information, services and support. Here are some of the ways Rutgers and Johnson & Johnson work together:

* Fellowships and internships. Many companies take interns, but Johnson & Johnson underwrites "fellowships" for students enrolled in the Rutgers master's program in communication and information studies. Fellows receive the same \$10,000-a-year stipend as teaching assistants at Rutgers. Johnson & Johnson also picks up the tab for their tuition and fees and pays a 10 percent overhead fee to the master's program. As director of the program, I use that overhead for receptions and luncheons for the students, van rental so that 10 students

each year can attend the Institute for Public Relations Research and Education dinner in New York, and other projects that benefit all students. Currently we have two students working in the public relations department as well as two others in the corporate contributions area. The students file weekly reports by E-mail both to their company supervisor and to me at Rutgers, where they receive internship credit.

* Continuing education. At the request of Johnson & Johnson Vice President Bill Nielsen, I sit on his committee that is preparing a continuing education plan for the corporate public relations department. Because I am familiar with CE programs at other Fortune 500 companies and at large public relations agencies in New Jersey and New York, and because I am involved with CE at Rutgers, I bring expertise to the table that most corporations do not have when they plan for CE.

* Shadowing days. Nielsen has been kind enough to allow me to "shadow" him on days when he is involved in a variety of public relations activities for his firm. Recently I accompanied him to New York for a meeting with the director of the New York PBS station as the two discussed Johnson & Johnson's funding of upcoming health-related and cultural programming for the station. On other occasions he has let me sit in on sessions where he worked with researchers and an advertising agency to test copy for a pharmaceutical industry issues advertisement, and one or two of my suggestions were used to direct the research.

* Sponsorships and contributions. Because of its special ties with the communication program at Rutgers, Johnson & Johnson routinely buys tables for

their interns and our PRSSA chapter officers at fundraising or anniversary events at the school, and it participates as a sponsor of our annual career day.

* Special projects. When a corporate executive vice president who serves on the board of the American Red Cross in New Jersey expressed concern that Rutgers students were not active enough as blood donors, the public relations department gave a grant to the communication program to have public relations students plan a campaign to enroll more student donors. Working with the local blood bank, the students went beyond the usual publicity campaign. They planned a training program for resident hall student preceptors to convince them to promote blood donation as the "thing to do" when indoctrinating first-year students to campus life. The program resulted in an increase in donations.

* Outreach to other campuses. When Johnson & Johnson needs to involve students in others parts of the country in projects, I am usually able to draw on my personal contacts with professors at other campuses to put the company in touch with resources. University of Miami students, for example, are involved in a program to publicize the Touch Institute at a Miami hospital as a result of our contacts.

* History projects. When PRSA's Educators Section planned its oral history project to record public relations leaders on videotape, the Rutgers-Johnson & Johnson connection made it easy for me to arrange for the company to give us the use of its video studio and staff (conveniently, the day after they taped their quarterly video magazine and still had the interview set in place). My interview with Lawrence Foster, head of public relations through the 1970s and 1980s, went not only into the resource center of PRSA, but also

into the archives of Rutgers and of Johnson & Johnson.

* Speakers and site visits. The company continues to provide classroom speakers, and when the PRSSA Northeastern regional conference was held at Rutgers, Nielsen was the keynote speaker. In addition, the company routinely offers its facilities for site visits by Rutgers students. The favorite event among students is the annual full-evening (starting with a light supper) visit that showcases video production, state-of-the-art videoconferencing facilities, and a demonstration of how computerized multimedia presentations are enhancing the message the firm prepares for internal and external audiences. Students and company staff often hang around for an hour after the evening is officially over to discuss the techniques and the technology the company is using.

By now the relationship between the company and the campus is so taken for granted that both parties feel comfortable assuming they can count on the other to be involved in projects involving their mutual interests. As a teacher, I must guard against becoming a totally uncritical cheerleader for the company. Consequently, I do let my students know of certain actions of the company that I question. And, I admit to the students that, as a result of my belief in the soundness of Johnson & Johnson as a company, I occasionally add some more shares of its stock to my portfolio. It seems right in light of the continuing investment Johnson & Johnson makes in its neighboring university.